

interests, that a doctrine which confines them to their proper sphere, as the servant, not the master, of civilization, may reasonably be regarded as among the pregnant truisms which are a permanent element in any sane philosophy. Nor is it, perhaps, as clear to-day as it seemed a century ago, that it has been an unmixed gain to substitute the criterion of economic expediency, so easily interpreted in terms of quantity and mass, for the conception of a rule of life superior to individual desires and temporary exigencies, which was what the mediaeval theorist meant by "natural law/"

When all is said, the fact remains that, on the small scale involved, the problem of moralizing economic life was faced and not abandoned. The experiment may have been impracticable, and almost from the first it was discredited by the notorious corruption of ecclesiastical authorities, who preached renunciation and gave a lesson in greed. But it had in it something of the heroic, and to ignore the nobility of the conception is not less absurd than to idealize its practical results. The best proof of the appeal which the attempt to subordinate economic interests to religion had made is the persistence of the same attempt among reformers, to whom the Pope was anti-Christ and the canon law an abomination, and the horror of decent men when, in the sixteenth century, its breakdown became too obvious to be contested.